

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A surgical sling assembly for implanting in tissue to provide anatomical support in a patient, comprising:
a sling; and
a biocompatible sleeve having a lumen, at least a portion of the sling being positioned within the lumen, and ~~easing enclosing at least a portion of the sling, the biocompatible easing~~ comprising a bioabsorbable material, wherein the biocompatible sleeve ~~easing~~ is absorbed by the patient's tissues after the surgical sling assembly is positioned within the patient's tissue to provide anatomical support.
2. (cancelled)
3. (cancelled)
4. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises an alginate.
5. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises a sugar based formulation.
6. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises a starch.
7. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises a gelatin.
8. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises cellulose.

9. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises polyvinyl alcohol.
10. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises polyglycolic acid.
11. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises polylactic acid.
12. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises polydioxinone.
13. (original) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the bioabsorbable material comprises a lubricious material.
14. (currently amended) The sling assembly of claim 1, wherein the surgical sling assembly is ~~positioned~~ adapted for positioning within a patient's periurethral tissues to treat urinary incontinence.
15. (currently amended) The sling assembly of claim 14, wherein the biocompatible sleeve ~~easing~~ is absorbed by the patient's tissues in less than ten minutes after the surgical sling assembly is positioned within the patient's periurethral tissues.
16. (currently amended) The sling assembly of claim 15, wherein the biocompatible sleeve ~~easing~~ is absorbed by the patient's tissues in eight to ten minutes after the surgical sling assembly is positioned within the patient's periurethral tissues.
17. (currently amended) A method for providing anatomical support in a patient, comprising:
providing a surgical sling assembly, comprising:
a sling; and
a biocompatible sleeve having a lumen, at least a portion of the sling being positioned within the lumen, and ~~easing enclosing at least a portion of the sling, the biocompatible easing~~ comprising a bioabsorbable material, wherein the biocompatible sleeve ~~easing~~ is

absorbed by the patient's tissues after the surgical sling assembly is positioned within the patient's tissue to provide anatomical support; and
positioning the sling within the patient's tissue.

18. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein positioning the sling comprises positioning the sling within a patient's periurethral tissues to treat urinary incontinence.